

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

**Claim 1 (canceled).**

**Claim 2 (original):** A document image processing device, comprising:  
character region extracting unit extracting character regions respectively from a plurality of document images which are partitioned and read;  
overlapping detecting unit detecting character regions whose matching degrees are high by making a comparison between positions and sizes of the respective character regions extracted by said character region extracting unit, and detecting an overlapping of the plurality of document images based on positions of the detected character regions whose matching degrees are high; and image merging unit merging the plurality of document images at an overlapping position detected by said overlapping detecting unit.

**Claim 3 (original):** A document image processing device, comprising:

character region extracted unit extracting character regions respectively from a plurality of document images which are partitioned and read;

character recognizing unit recognizing character images within the character regions extracted by said character region extracting unit;

overlapping detecting unit detecting an overlapping of the plurality of document images based on character recognition results of the respective document images, which are obtained by said character recognizing unit, and on a result of a comparison between positions and sizes of the respective character regions in the plurality of document images, which are extracted by said character region extracting unit; and

image merging unit merging the plurality of document images at an overlapping position detected by said overlapping detecting unit.

**Claim 4 (previously presented):** The document image processing device according to claim 2,

wherein said character region extracting unit extracts a plurality of character regions in line images in the plurality of document images.

**Claim 5 (previously presented):** The document image processing device according to claim 2,

wherein said overlapping detecting unit detects as an overlapping position of line images whose matching degrees are high by making a comparison between character regions in line images in a direction from edges of the plurality of document images to their centers.

**Claim 6 (previously presented):** The document image processing device according to claim 2, wherein:

the plurality of document images which are partitioned and read are two document images; and

said overlapping detecting unit detects an overlapping position of the two document images by making a comparison between character regions in line images in the two document images.

**Claim 7 (previously presented):** The document image processing device according to - claim 2,

wherein said overlapping detecting unit regards as detection targets character regions in particular regions in the plurality of document images.

**Claim 8 (previously presented):** The document image processing device according to claim 2, wherein said overlapping detecting unit detects an overlapping position sequentially from a direction with a higher priority among a plurality of detection directions.

**Claim 9 (original):** The document image processing device according to claim 8, wherein said overlapping detecting unit determines an overlapping position detection direction depending on whether or not the document images are written either vertically or horizontally.

**Claim 10 (previously presented):** The document image processing device according to claim 2, wherein said overlapping detecting unit detects an overlapping position only in a particular direction.

**Claim 11 (previously presented):** The document image processing device according to claim 2, wherein said character region extracting unit extracts a region enclosed by a tetragon circumscribed to a character image as a character region.

**Claim 12 (canceled).**

**Claim 13 (previously presented):** A document image merging method, comprising:  
detecting a plurality of character regions whose matching degrees are high by making a comparison between positions and sizes of the respective character regions in the respective document images;

detecting an overlapping of the plurality of document images based on positions of the plurality of character regions whose matching degrees are high; and merging the plurality of document images at a detected overlapping position.

**Claim 14 (original):** A document image merging method, comprising:  
recognizing character images;  
detecting an overlapping of the plurality of document images based on character recognition results of the respective document images, and on a result of a comparison between positions and sizes of the respective character regions in the plurality of document images; and  
merging the plurality of document images at a detected overlapping position.

**Claim 15 (previously presented):** A document image processing device comprising:

region partitioning unit partitioning first and second document images which are partitioned and read, respectively into a plurality of vertical and horizontal regions;

line image extracting unit extracting line images containing only character images from the plurality of vertical and horizontal regions partitioned by said region partitioning unit;

region judging unit comparing between the number of line images containing only character images in the plurality of regions vertically partitioned and the number of such line images found in the plurality of regions horizontally partitioned, and judging the plurality of regions that hold more line images found to contain only character images as a low graphics-ratio region;

overlapping detecting unit detecting an overlapping position between the first and second document images, based on positions of character regions whose matching degrees are high by making a comparison between a character region of a line image in a region judged as a low graphics-ratio region by region judging unit and a character region of a line image in a corresponding region of the second document image; and

image merging unit merging first and second document images at the overlapping position detected by said overlapping detecting unit.

**Claim 16 (previously presented):** A document image processing device, comprising:

region partitioning unit partitioning first and second document images which are partitioned and read, respectively into a plurality of vertical and horizontal regions;

line image extracting unit extracting line images containing only character images from the plurality of vertical and horizontal regions partitioned by said region partitioning unit;

region judging unit comparing between the number of line images containing only character images in the plurality of regions vertically partitioned and the number of such line images found in the plurality of regions horizontally partitioned, and judging the plurality of regions that hold more line images found to contain only character images as a low graphics-ratio region;

character recognizing unit recognizing character images in the line images in the region judged as a low graphics-ratio region by the region judging unit;

overlapping detecting unit detecting an overlapping position between the first and second document images, based on a character recognition result of the low graphics ratio region in the first document, and a character recognition result of a corresponding region in the second document; and

image merging unit merging the first and second document images at an overlapping position detected by said overlapping detecting unit.

**Claim 17 (previously presented):** A document image processing device comprising:  
region partitioning unit partitioning a plurality of document images which are partitioned and  
read respectively into a plurality of regions;  
line image extracting unit extracting line images respectively from the plurality of regions  
partitioned by said region partitioning unit;  
overlapping detecting unit detecting a plurality of character regions whose matching degrees  
are high, by making a comparison between positions and sizes of a plurality of character regions in  
the line images extracted by said line image extracting unit, and detecting an overlapping position of  
the plurality of document images, based on the positions of the detected character regions; and  
image merging unit merging the plurality of document images at the overlapping position  
detected by said overlapping detecting unit.

**Claim 18 (original):** The document image processing device according to claim 15,  
wherein:  
said region partitioning unit partitions the plurality of document images into a plurality of  
regions in a vertical and a horizontal direction; and  
said line image extracting unit makes a comparison between the number of line images  
extracted from a region partitioned in the vertical direction in the plurality of document images and  
the number of line images extracted from a region partitioned in the horizontal direction, and  
recognizes a line image direction of a region including a larger number of line images as a line image

direction of the plurality of document images.

**Claim 19 (original):** The document image processing device according to claim 15, wherein said line image extracting unit detects pixels for one pixel line in a partitioned region, and detects pixel lines including a predetermined or larger number of black pixels as black pixel lines, and other lines as white pixel lines.

**Claim 20 (original):** The document image processing device according to claim 19, wherein said line image extracting unit detects pixels in the partitioned regions in line units in a direction vertical to a partitioning bar of the regions partitioned by said region partitioned unit.

**Claim 21 (original):** The document image processing device according to claim 19, wherein said line image extracts as a black pixel region a region where the number of successive black pixel lines is within a predetermined range.

**Claim 22 (original):** The document image processing device according to claim 21, wherein said line image extracting unit extracts as a white pixel region a region where the number of successive white pixel lines is equal to or larger than a predetermined value.

**Claim 23 (original):** The document image processing device according to claim 15,

wherein said region partitioning unit changes a partitioned region size depending on a resolution of a read document image.

**Claim 24 (original):** The document image processing device according to claim 21, wherein said line image extracting unit changes the number of black pixel lines regarded as black pixel regions depending on a resolution of a read document image.

**Claim 25 (previously presented):** The document image processing device according to claim 21,

wherein said line image extracting unit extracts a black pixel region adjacent a white pixel region satisfying a predetermined condition as a line image.

**Claim 26 (original):** The document image processing device according to claim 18, wherein said overlapping detecting unit detects character regions whose matching degrees are high as an overlapping position by making a comparison between character regions in the line images in the plurality of partitioned region in the direction of the larger number of line images, which are extracted by said line image extracting unit.

**Claim 27 (original):** The document image processing device according to claim 15,

wherein said overlapping detecting unit stores a detection frequency of a line image which was previously detected as an overlapping position of a document image in correspondence with identification information assigned to the line image, and detects an overlapping position by giving precedence to a line image with a high detection frequency.

**Claim 28 (original):** The document image processing device according to claim 15, wherein said overlapping detecting unit makes a comparison between the line images in the respective regions in a predetermined order.

**Claim 29 (previously presented):** A document image processing device, comprising:  
region partitioning unit partitioning first and second document images which are partitioned and read, into a plurality of vertical and horizontal regions;  
line image extracting unit extracting line images containing only character images from the plurality of regions partitioned by said region partitioning unit;

overlapping detecting unit detecting an overlapping position between the first and second document images based on positions and sizes of character regions whose matching degrees are high by making a comparison between character regions of a line image in a region containing a plurality of line images, of a plurality of regions in the first document image extracted by said line image extracting unit and a character region of a line image in a corresponding region of the second document image;

image merging unit merging the first and second document images at the overlapping position detected by said overlapping detecting unit; and

setting unit allowing a setting of whether or not to automatically merge the plurality of document images on a display screen.

**Claim 30 (original):** The document image processing device according to claim 29, wherein said setting unit is an operation button displayed on the display screen.

**Claim 31 (original):** The document image processing device according to claim 29, wherein said setting unit with which a user can set the number of merging sheets of document images.

**Claim 32 (previously presented):** A document image merging method, comprising:

partitioning first and second document images from among a plurality of document images which are partitioned and read, respectively into a plurality of vertical and horizontal regions; extracting line images containing only character images from the plurality of vertical and horizontal regions partitioned; comparing between the number of line images containing only character images in the plurality of regions vertically partitioned and the number of such line images found in the plurality of regions horizontally partitioned, and judging the plurality of regions that hold more line images found to contain only character images as a low graphics-ratio region; detecting an overlapping position between the first and second document images, based on positions of character regions whose matching degrees are high by making a comparison between a character region of a line image in a region judged as the low graphics-ratio region and a character region of a line image in a corresponding region of the second document image; and merging the first and second document images at the detected overlapping position.

**Claim 33 (previously presented):** A document image merging method, comprising:  
partitioning first and second document images among a plurality of document images which are partitioned and read, respectively into a plurality of vertical and horizontal regions; extracting line images containing only character images from the plurality of vertical and horizontal regions partitioned;

comparing between the number of line images containing only character images in the plurality of regions vertically partitioned and the number of such line images found in the plurality of regions horizontally partitioned, and judging the plurality of regions that hold more line images found to contain only character images as a low graphics-ratio region;

recognizing character images in character regions in the line images in the low graphics-ratio region;

detecting an overlapping position between the first and second document images, based on character recognition results of the low graphics-ratio region and a character recognition result of a corresponding region in the second document image; and

merging the first and second document images at the detected overlapping position.

**Claim 34 (currently amended):** A document image merging method, comprising:  
partitioning first and second document images among a plurality of document images which are partitioned and read, respectively into a plurality of vertical and horizontal regions;

extracting line images containing only character images from the plurality of vertical and horizontal regions partitioned;

comparing between the number of line images containing only character images in the plurality of regions vertically partitioned and the number of such line images found in the plurality of regions horizontally partitioned, and judging the plurality of regions that hold more line images found to contain only character images as a low graphics-ratio region;

detecting an overlapping position between the first and second document images based on positions of the extracted line image whose matching degrees are high by making a comparison between a character region of a line image in a region ~~containing a plurality of line images~~ of a ~~plurality of regions in the first document image~~ judged as the low graphics-ratio region and a character region of a line image in a corresponding region of the second document image; and merging the first and second document images at the detected overlapping position.

**Claim 35 (previously presented):** A document image merging method, comprising:

making a display to allow a setting of whether or not to automatically merge a plurality of document images which are partitioned and read on a display screen;  
partitioning first and second document images among the plurality of document images among the plurality of document images which are partitioned and read, respectively into a plurality of vertical and horizontal regions;

extracting line images containing only line character images from the plurality of vertical and horizontal regions partitioned;

comparing between the number of line images containing only character images in the plurality of regions vertically partitioned and the number of such line images found in the plurality of regions horizontally partitioned, and judging the plurality of regions that hold more line images found to contain only character images as a low graphics -ratio region;

recognizing character images in character regions within the extracted line images;

detecting an overlapping position of the first and second document images, based on positions of character regions whose matching degrees are high by making a comparison between character region of a line image in the low graphics-ratio region and a region of a line image in a corresponding region of the second document image.

**Claim 36 (original):** A computer-readable storage medium on which is recorded a program for causing a computer to execute a document image merging process, said process comprising:

extracting character regions respectively from a plurality of document images which are partitioned and read;

detecting character regions whose matching degrees are high by making a comparison between a plurality of character regions in the plurality of document images based on positions and

sizes of the character regions, and detecting an overlapping position of the plurality of document images based on positions of the character regions whose matching degrees are high; and merging the plurality of document images at the detected overlapping position.

**Claim 37 (previously presented):** A computer-readable storage medium on which is recorded a program for causing a computer to execute a document image merging process, said process comprising:

extracting character regions respectively from a plurality of document images which are partitioned and read;

recognizing character images within the extracted character regions;

detecting an overlapping position of the plurality of document images based on character recognition results of the respective document images and on a result of a comparison between positions and sizes of the plurality of character regions in the plurality of document images; and

merging the plurality of document images at the detected overlapping position.

**Claim 38 (currently amended):** A computer-readable storage medium on which is recorded a program for causing a computer to execute a document image merging process, said process comprising:

partitioning first and second document images among a plurality of document images which are partitioned and read, respectively into a plurality of vertical and horizontal regions;

extracting line images containing only character images from the plurality of vertical and horizontal regions partitioned;

comparing between the number of line images containing only character images in the plurality of regions vertically partitioned and the number [[o£]] of such line images found in the plurality of regions horizontally partitioned, and judging the plurality of regions that hold more line images found to contain only character images as a low graphics-ratio region;

detecting an overlapping position between the first and second document images based on positions of character regions whose matching degrees are high by making a comparison between a character region of a line image in the low graphics-ratio region and a character region of a line image in a corresponding region of the second document image; and

merging the first and second document images at the detected overlapping position.

**Claim 39 (previously presented):** A computer-readable storage medium on which is recorded a program for causing a computer to execute a document image merging process, said process comprising:

partitioning first and second document images among a plurality of document images which are partitioned and read, respectively into a plurality of vertical and horizontal regions;

extracting line images containing only character images from the plurality of vertical and horizontal regions partitioned;

comparing between the number of line images containing only character images in the plurality of regions vertically partitioned and the number of such line images found in the plurality of regions horizontally partitioned, and judging the plurality of regions that hold more line images found to contain only character images as a low graphics-ratio region;

recognizing character images within character regions in the line images in the regions judged as a low graphics-ratio region;

detecting an overlapping position between the first and second document images based on a character recognition result of the low graphics-ratio region and a character recognition result of a corresponding region in the second document image; and

merging the first and second document images at the detected overlapping position.

**Claim 40 (previously presented):** A computer-readable storage medium on which is recorded a program for causing a computer to execute a document image merging process, said process comprising:

making a display to allow a setting of whether or not to automatically merge a plurality of document images which are partitioned and read on a display screen;

partitioning first and second document images among the plurality of document images, respectively into a plurality of vertical and horizontal regions;

extracting line images containing only characters images respectively from the plurality of vertical and horizontal regions partitioned;

recognizing character images in character regions within the extracted line images; comparing between the number of line images containing only character images in the plurality of regions vertically partitioned and the number of such line images found in the plurality of regions horizontally partitioned, and judging the plurality of regions that hold more line images found to contain only character images as a low graphics-ratio region; detecting an overlapping position between the first and second document images based on positions of character regions whose matching degrees are high by making a comparison between a character region of a line image in the region judged as a low graphics-ratio region and a character region of a line image in a corresponding region of the second document image; and merging the first and second document images at the detected overlapping position.

**Claim 41 (canceled).**